



State of Wisconsin GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 12, 2015 - Teleconference

Public Participation

Room 513, GEF 2 Building, 101 S. Webster Street, Madison

Conference Room 1, DNR Service Center 107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhinelander

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

State Trails Council Members present:

Randy Harden, ATV/UTV representative (member of *Wisconsin ATV-UTV Association*)

Leif Hubbard, *Wisconsin Department of Transportation* [non-voting]

Doug Johnson, snowmobiling representative (member of *Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs*)

Phil Johnsrud, non-motorized water trails representative

Skip Maletzke, tourism/business representative [non-voting]

Mike McFadzen, cross-country skiing representative (member of *WI Nordic Network, Northern Kettle Moraine Nordic Ski Club*)

Bryan Much, off-highway motorcycle representative (member of *Wisconsin Off-Highway Motorcycle Association*) [STC Chair]

Ken Neitzke, hiking representative (member of *Ice Age Trail Alliance*)

Luana Schneider, 4-wheel drive vehicles representative (member of *Wisconsin 4-Wheel Drive Association*) [STC Secretary]

John Siegert, off-road bicycling representative (member of *Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin*) [STC Vice Chair]

Jim White, boards and small wheels representative

State Trails Council Members not in attendance

Robbie Webber, bicycling representative (member of *Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin*)

Others present

Kricket Jewett (*Wisconsin Horse Council*)

Jason Wilke (*Waukesha County Parks*)

Michelle Barker (*International Mountain Bicycling Association*)

David Phillips (*Ice Age Trail Alliance; Nonmotorized Recreation and Transportation Trails Council*)

Rebecca Haefner

WI DNR Staff present:

Peter Biermeier, Brigit Brown, Daniel Buckler

10:00 A.M. – Welcome and introductions

- Much called the meeting to order and took attendance.

10:02 A.M. – Agenda review/repair and approval of November meeting minutes

- Much reviewed the process for drafting and publishing minutes. Harden moved to approve the November minutes. McFadzen seconded. Motion passed. Schneider later noted a few grammatical errors and a correction to the list of others present: Alex Bub was present as a member of WOHMA, not WOHVA.



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10:03 A.M. – Chair Report and pending issues

- Much discussed location options for future meetings. The prospective April location at Mirror Lake State Park had to be canceled because the room would be too small.
- Much suggested northeast Wisconsin for the August meeting because there have been some noteworthy recreation management initiatives in the area. He thought it would be useful for the STC to experience a series of short (15-20 minute) presentations about some of the more remarkable actions and activities of select groups and agencies that would be of interest to wide variety of user groups and the DNR. The user group briefings previously scheduled for August (Equestrian and Bicycling) would be moved to the fall meeting to allow for the August mini-briefs. Much said that he would coordinate with some of the council members regarding potential briefers and content for the August meeting so that we have a better picture of things by the time of our April meeting. There are more potential topics and briefings than there is time available during the August meeting.

10:07 A.M. – DNR Report

- Brown updated the council on candidate appointments. Each touring bicycle and equestrian candidate passed the DNR's background check and applications were submitted by candidates to the Governor's office, where they are currently under review.
- Brown reviewed some of the master plans in progress. She recently had a meeting about the Lower Wisconsin Riverway where there will be some foot trails, possibly bicycle trails and enhanced equestrian trails. The DNR will try to work with Dane County to string together public lands to enhance equestrian opportunities.
- Brown discussed the Bikeways Project. Toole Design Group signed a contract recently and the project will kick off in about a week. The project will identify a network of mapped bicycle routes in the state. Project completion is planned for December 2015. There will be a public input opportunity to review different methodologies for identifying bikeway routes, possibly taking place in early June to coincide with Wisconsin Bike Week. There will be a second round of public input in the fall. As a method for collecting public input, the project will be utilizing Wikimaps to improve the public's ability to make comments on specific geographic areas. Wilke commented that the City of Wauwatosa used Toole Design Group and Wikimaps and they were very pleased with the results. Much asked how extensive the project was. Brown replied that four main interstate routes would be created and a handful of intrastate bikeways identified as well. An additional part of the project is to develop a toolkit giving local communities information on how to create their own bikeways.
- Brown discussed a GIS project being undertaken in Parks and Recreation. All of the trails within state park properties are to be mapped and the data is to become available to staff, partners and the public, first upon request and later as downloadable material and/or an interactive map. The DNR is currently synthesizing and cleaning the data that is currently available and will later map out remaining properties. Additionally, an interactive map for the Lake Michigan State Water Trail will be available this spring, first as a desktop application, then for mobile devices. A similar project might be undertaken for the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.
- Biermeier updated the council on the Department's Motorized Access project. Biermeier will bring some other people involved in the project to the April STC meeting when they can discuss the project's progress in more detail. As discussed in the last STC meeting, this project has a planning team and inventory team and each has been working internally, but not much information is currently available to present to the STC.
- Biermeier elaborated on a few of the master plans in progress. He and Brown, along with others in the DNR, recently met with the Wisconsin Horse Council to talk about equestrian issues within master plans. In order to receive the most up-to-date information on the master planning process, Biermeier encouraged interested parties to navigate to the DNR website and type "master planning" into the search bar. The master plans in progress will be front and center on that page and parties can click on



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the plan they are interested in. Those plan pages have a lot of information as to what has occurred so far in the planning process. If further interested, people can subscribe to receive news for that plan using a Gov Delivery button on the page's sidebar, or they can contact the staff listed on the sidebar.

- Biermeier said that the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area plan will probably be going out for review around the middle of July. Additionally, there is activity on a trail in Sauk County which would go from Sauk City to Devil's Lake State Park
- The Wisconsin State Parks System Strategic Directions document will hopefully be released for STC review in the next 45 days. It is a document outlining the managing philosophy of Parks and Biermeier noted that they would like the STC to comment on some of the points and identify what are the most critical or highest priority issues. The Chairman will be mailed a copy of the Strategic Directions, likely in February 2015.

10:35 A.M. -- State Trails Council member reports

- *Water Trails.* Johnsrud noted that there was recently a big planning session for the Sierra Club's River Touring Section, one of the oldest and most respected paddling groups in Wisconsin. They are planning 50-60 trips in 2015 and coordinate with other groups, such as those in Madison, Minneapolis and Black River Falls.
- *Equestrians.* Jewett was not able to attend the Horse Council's meeting with the DNR the previous week, but they are hard at work planning for the Midwest Horse Fair taking place April 17-19 in Madison.
- *ATVs/UTVs.* Harden noted that WATVA is planning their annual meeting April 10-12 in Wausau. To provide a new approach to their meeting, it will be a recreation and economic summit.
- *Department of Transportation.* No report.
- *Tourism.* Maletzke promoted the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism March 15-17 in La Crosse. He encouraged all STC members to attend, especially considering there are several trail-related break-out sessions during the conference. It is a great place for networking.
- *Cross-country Skiing.* McFadzen noted that most of Wisconsin currently has some level of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Some places in the north have been skiable since November, but most places in the southern half of the state have only recently returned to good snow conditions after a warm December. Registration for the Birkebeiner has been full since October. The board of the Birkebeiner has wanted to acquire an easement around the Telemark Lodge so that a permanent start and end location could be established for the race, but there have been snags in that process; there has been some interest in reopening the lodge. The International Paralympic Committee World Nordic Championship will be taking place in Cable in late January and early February. McFadzen has spoken to many people around the state who have told him that fat bikes do not generally impact groomed ski trails. McFadzen asked Johnsrud if his group allowed fat bikes on the ski trails. Johnsrud replied that they currently do not, but he agreed that they do not seem to impact the trails much. In fact, his group is hosting a fat bike race on the ski trails. McFadzen then suggested Iola as a possible location for the April meeting. Much and the DNR will look into that possibility.
- *Hikers.* Neitzke reported that hikers were having a great time with little or no snow until recently. First Day Hikes were a great success across the state. He singled out the hike at Lapham Peak which had 120 participants. Brown said that that there were 11 First Day Hikes on Wisconsin Park properties and participation and miles hiked almost doubled from last year.



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- *4-Wheel Drive Vehicles.* Schneider said that this time of the year is pretty quiet. Some groups are on private land clearing and cleaning land for owners to reciprocate for their permission to use their land. The 4WD community will pursue AB369 again this year. The potential off-road vehicle park in Forest County has had some set-backs. The county and the Wisconsin Off-Road Vehicle Park organization continue to explore and address issues related to the park.
- *Snowmobiles.* Johnson reported that 20 counties have open snowmobile trails, mostly in the northern part of the state. There has been high traffic over the last few days in those open locations, with reports of snowmobilers spending 1-2 hours in line at gas stations to fuel their sleds. It is very good for the local economy, particularly because a lot of the riders are from out of town. The World Championship Snowmobile Derby is January 15-18 in Eagle River, Vilas County. Johnson noted that it is currently snowmobile safety week. So far, there have been four snowmobile fatalities this winter. The second annual Celebrate Wisconsin Snowmobiling event will be in Hayward February 8-9. There was recently a meeting of directors of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs. There was a lot of enthusiasm and positive work being expressed there.
- *Off-Road Bicycling.* Siegert introduced Michelle Barker, the new director of the Upper Midwest IMBA region. He then mentioned that Ray's Indoor Bike Park in Milwaukee will be hosting an IMBA event January 17-18 to raise money and awareness of the organization. He explained that the January 10 article on fat bikes in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel had a strong business focus which highlighted the economic benefit of fat bikes for the bicycling industry (<http://www.jsonline.com/business/fat-bikes-gain-traction-with-cyclists-b99422331z1-288145791.html>). Siegert encouraged people to go to the website for the Wisconsin Fat-Bike Series, which has a schedule of races in early 2015, culminating in the Fat Bike Birkie (<http://www.wisfatbikeracing.com>).
- *Boards/Small Wheels.* No report.
- *Off-Highway Motorcycles.* Much reported that it is currently ice riding season when motorcyclists install ice screws in their tires which allows for excellent traction on ice (<http://www.lakecountrynow.com/multimedia/photos/Ice-racers--288301151.html>). Upcoming organized ice riding events include a three hour fundraiser in the Kettle Moraine area and a national event on Lake Koshkonong. Much also spoke of the interrelation some off-highway and adventure motorcyclists have with mountain biking and offered an article that described riders carrying a mountain bike on their adventure motorcycle so they can split their recreation time on a trip between the two activities (<http://www.dirtrider.com/features/video-bikes-on-bikes/#.VJ1yOWIL0ck.facebook>).

10:55 A.M. – Discussion of a citizen's letter regarding his dissatisfaction with fees and permits for State bicycle trails.

- Much read part of the letter that a citizen sent to the State Trails Council and which all members had received prior to the meeting. The citizen encouraged the council to take steps toward removing the fees for bicyclists using state trails.
- Much then explained what the state trail pass money pays for, referencing the 2008 numbers which showed that the average revenue for state trails was \$29,171 but expenditures for the average trail was \$84,341. State Trails are still heavily subsidized by park admission fees, camping fees and some state tax dollars.
- Siegert asked that, hypothetically, if everybody on the council agreed that they wanted the fees to be eliminated, what could they do besides make a recommendation to the DNR? And if people wanted the



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fees eliminated, wouldn't they have to go through the legislative process instead of the DNR? Brown responded that the fee amounts are actually in the Administrative Code and it would technically be possible for the DNR to take steps toward removing those fees, but it would be a very slow process

- Wilke noted that he would like Waukesha County to use a trail pass program, but the county is prevented from doing that by agreements with We Energies and American Transmission Company. He also likes the opportunity a trail pass offers to educate users on trail etiquette. Wilke then suggested that a trail pass could note where the trail pass funds go.
- McFadzen mentioned that it would be great to have all trails be free, but those fees are needed to maintain the trails. It is unfortunate, but that is what is necessary.
- Schneider said that it could be confusing for a user to identify which trails require a fee and which do not. Brown said that there are a few places online where that information is available, including the Web pages for individual trails and the state trail pass page (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/trailpass.html>).
- Much noted that state trails are still a good bargain given the reasonable cost to the user and the subsidies from other funding sources.
- Johnsrud expressed concern that there is a trend across the country to privatize management when agencies are continually squeezed for funding.
- Biermeier said that the trail pass program can sometimes be inconvenient as circumstances and facilities vary among trail sites but that the DNR continues to explore and weigh options that might improve the customer and DNR experience with the program. He was hopeful that improving technology could improve the trail funding process.
- Johnson made a motion to not recommend any changes to the current state trail pass system. White seconded. Motion passed. Much said that he would write a letter to the citizen who prompted the council's discussion.

11:11 A.M. – Public comment

- Michelle Barker of IMBA thanked everybody for the warm welcome as she has moved into her new position. She looks forward to looking at master plans and hopes to meet many of the trail user groups and managers soon. She noted that there is a national Fat Bike Summit January 23-25 in Jackson, Wyoming.
- Dave Phillips of the Nonmotorized Recreation and Transportation Trails Council explained the work that his council has been doing, including the exploration of funding mechanisms to support trail construction and maintenance. The main focus of the NRTTC is to act as a resource and focal point for nonmotorized trail users in Wisconsin. Brown noted that the survey the NRTTC put out in the fall has received over 5000 responses so far.
- Rebecca Haefner expressed enthusiasm for trails and was interested in learning more about trails in the state.

11:17 A.M. – Identify future agenda items

- Update on the DNR's road inventory project
- State Parks Strategic Directions review and comment
- Trail Towns update
- Overview of potential standard mapping system for marking reference points on trails (remote intersections and the like)
- Updates on the STC candidates; four STC members have terms expiring in July 2015

11:24 A.M. – Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn by Harden. Seconded by Johnsrud. Meeting adjourned.